

## on the COVER



A young girl enjoys a water slide

Airboats offer access to wetlands and shallow waterways

Communications in the field are critical to many activities

Some gates and structures must be operated manually

Managers with varied expertise work together to resolve issues

## Advisory Group Scrutinizes Everglades Clean-up Plan

*Take 47 divergent opinions. Mix in heaping helpings of mind-numbing science and technology. Add just a dash of politics and sprinkle with lots of controversy. Bring to a boil and let simmer. The result: a melding and fusion of ideas and concerns into a workable consensus.*



“As the Governing Board and staff continue to move forward with critical implementation plans and pivotal decision points, it is vital that all perspectives be presented and considered.”

— MICHAEL COLLINS  
GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER

The South Florida Water Management District Governing Board created the Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) in April 2001 to enhance public participation and consensus-making on critical water resource issues, projects and programs affecting South Florida. While it hasn't always been a bed of roses, it has provided an excellent opportunity to solicit external viewpoints on some thorny issues.

The Commission's 47 members reflect a balanced, cross-section representation of South Florida, including Governing Board appointees from the business community, water supply utilities, public interest groups, local government, agriculture and environmental organizations.

In addition to the Board appointees, a number of agencies have also selected representatives to serve on the commission: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Seminole Tribe of Florida, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other agencies or groups identified by the Governing Board.

I was asked to oversee the commission by Governing Board Chair Nicolás Gutiérrez. So far, it's been a bumpy, but rewarding experience. While there are still lots of things to disagree on, the members generally agree that the commission provides an open forum for debate, discussion and input on important issues.

The group has taken up a number of critical and far-ranging topics with primary emphasis on Everglades restoration and water supply. The commission has also advocated the Board's directive for greater public involvement by including opportunities for public feedback at commission meetings and workshops.

In response to the controversy and misunderstanding surrounding amendments to the Everglades Forever Act this year, the Governing Board looked to the Water Resources Advisory Commission as the primary forum and conduit for public comment

and analysis on the “Long-Term Plan” for achieving water quality goals in the Everglades. This conceptual, technical document – three years in the making – details the recommended strategy for further reducing phosphorus inflows from all basins into the Everglades.

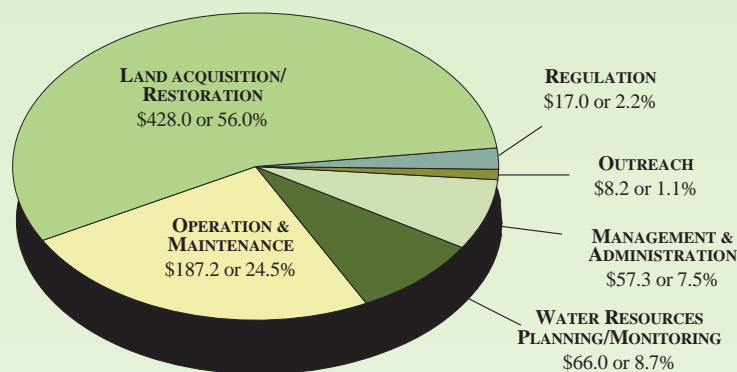
In addition to the extensive WRAC involvement in the review process, District staff also met with numerous other technical groups, agencies and local governments to solicit input on the plan.

Embodied in the 2003 legislation as the agreed-upon plan of action to ultimately meet Everglades water quality standards, the publicly-scrutinized and scientifically-peer-reviewed revised plan will serve as the basis for the District's permit application to the state Department of Environmental Protection. Mandated by both the original and amended Everglades Forever Act, the required DEP permit applies to all District facilities that discharge water into, through or from the Everglades.

As the Governing Board and staff continue to move forward with critical implementation plans and pivotal decision points regarding the management of South Florida's water resources, it is vital that all perspectives be presented and considered as part of that process. The Water Resources Advisory Commission helps us fulfill that responsibility.

## FY04 Budget Reflects Challenges and Priorities

WHERE THE MONEY GOES (IN MILLIONS)



TOTAL BUDGET \$763.7 MILLION

“I am very pleased to see your budget remains focused on the District's core mission and serves the state's largest population within current financial resources, all while undertaking the greatest environmental restoration program in the state.”

— JEB BUSH  
GOVERNOR, STATE OF FLORIDA



## Hugh English Honored

Earlier this year, District Governing Board member

Hugh M. English was honored by the University of Florida College of Agricultural and Life Sciences as a 2002 Alumni of Distinction.

English is a member at large representing Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Hendry, Glades, Osceola and Okeechobee counties. He and Doyle Connor were recognized for their contributions to the agricultural and natural resource industries. “I was deeply moved by this recognition,” said English. He graduated from the university in 1958.

English is a fourth generation Florida citrus grower. He was appointed to the District Governing Board by Governor Jeb Bush in 2001. Retired from A. Duda & Sons in 2001, he is the immediate past chairman of the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, and is also a member of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, the Florida Farm Bureau Citrus Advisory Committee, the Hendry County Farm Bureau, the South Florida Agriculture Council, the Florida Department of Citrus Medical and Nutritional Research Advisory Council and the Share Council of the University of Florida. In 1996, he received the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award of Merit from Gamma Sigma Delta, the Honor Society of Agriculture at the University of Florida.

A belt-tightening year due to lower revenues anticipated from state and federal sources presented a real challenge in fleshing out the District's final budget for fiscal year 2003-2004. The FY04 \$763.7 million budget reflects a \$41.7 million or 5.2 percent reduction from the District's FY03 amended budget. The final FY04 budget also maintains existing millage rates and staffing levels.

Despite these revenue challenges, the District's final budget includes funding for increased Everglades restoration efforts, local water resource protection projects, essential water supply projects, and critical operations and maintenance priorities.

“The Governing Board and senior management faced difficult choices throughout the budget development process in allocating the District's limited resources,” said Executive Director Henry Dean.

Major budget priorities include \$259.7 million to purchase land for ecosystem restoration and \$29.9 million to move forward with the Everglades long-term restoration plan.

The importance of keeping our flood control system effectively operating was recognized as an immediate priority with \$17.9 million dedicated to capital improvements. The infrastructure not only provides for flood control, but is critical to water supply and environmental management objectives.

Partnering with local governments on water resource protection projects was a major priority of the Governing Board. Over \$30 million is earmarked to be combined with monies from local agencies for projects that safeguard the region's water resources.

“Leveraging District resources with those of other governments or initiating public/private partnerships certainly makes good business sense and helps stretch District resources further,” said Paul Dumars, Chief Financial Officer.

The District's fiscal year 2003-04 begins October 1, 2003 and ends September 30, 2004.